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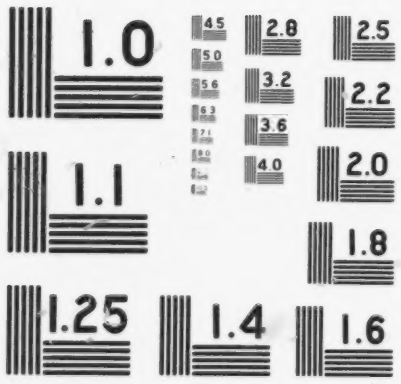

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APPLYING AUDIO-LINGUAL (ORAL) TECHNOLOGY TO BEGINNING READING.

BY- KING, PAUL KING, EVA

PUB DATE MAR 68

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC NOT AVAILABLE FROM EDRS. 14P.

DESCRIPTORS- *INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY, *BILINGUAL STUDENTS, *PRIMARY GRADES, *BEGINNING READING, TECHNOLOGY, COMMUNICATION SKILLS, TAPE RECORDINGS, ATTENTION SPAN, LISTENING SKILLS,

THE ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY IN LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IS DISCUSSED. IT IS KNOWN THAT COMMUNICATION SKILLS DEVELOP IN SEQUENCE, THAT THERE IS A GAP BETWEEN A 6-YEAR- OLD'S LISTENING AND READING SKILLS, AND THAT READING IS A MULTISENSORY SKILLS. IN ADDITION, THERE ARE STRIKING SIMILARITIES IN MASTERING ORAL LANGUAGE AND BEGINNING READING, AND THERE MUST BE ONE-AT-A-TIME AUDIOLINGUAL PERFORMANCES. IN ONE RESEARCH EXPERIMENT, AUDIOLINGUAL PERFORMANCE WAS DEALT WITH BY TAPE RECORDERS, HEADPHONES, AND CARTRIDGE TAPES. BY THIS METHOD, ATTENTION SPAN INCREASED, INTENSIVE CONCENTRATION INCREASED, AND THE TECHNICAL READINESS OF THE CHILDREN OFTEN SURPASSED THAT OF THEIR TEACHERS. A PILOT PROJECT ON AUDIOLINGUAL TECHNOLOGY AND BEGINNING READING WAS BEGUN IN THE VIRGIN ISLANDS. TEACHERS AND STUDENTS BENEFIT FROM SUCH A PROGRAM. THIS PAPER WAS BASED ON AN ILLUSTRATED LECTURE AT THE SEATTLE INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE AND IS A REPRINT FROM "TESOL QUARTERLY," MARCH 1968. (BK)

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P. O. Box 429
Englewood, N. J. 07631

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LEVEL II

APPLYING AUDIO-LINGUAL (ORAL) TECHNOLOGY TO BEGINNING READING

by

Paul and Eva King

Reprinted from TESOL Quarterly, March 1968

RE001 201

Based on
An illustrated lecture presented before the:

Twelfth Annual Convention
of the
International Reading Association

Seattle, Washington
May 3-6, 1967

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A-001-010

WHAT IS EDUCATION?

A few weeks ago, the Saturday Review reported:

EDUCATION IS HOW KIDS LEARN STUFF.

This definition comes from a seven-year-old, and it is a good definition.

(1) it concerns kids - not adults, not teachers, not parents.

(2) it concerns how kids learn - not how we teach, not what we teach, and certainly not what we think we teach them.

(3) it concerns the stuff which kids learn, the content, the curriculum, the fabric, the material, the program.

(4) and finally, it concerns the how, the ways and means, the approaches, the techniques - one of them now being education technology, which appears to open new avenues of learning, new opportunities within the classroom and beyond the classroom's limitations .... so that kids can learn stuff.

WHAT CAN EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY DO FOR EDUCATION?

What can education technology do for "kids" when they first come to school at the age of 5 or 6, and when the "stuff" is the vital area of communication - i. e. language

in all of its forms - listening and speaking, reading and writing?

COMMUNICATION AND SUCCESS

It is a well known fact that a child's success or failure in school and also in adult life is tied to his ability to communicate - to listen, to speak, to read, to write. The earliest school years - the primary years - are often crucial to later success.

PROBLEMS OF ACQUISITION

Reading specialists, language specialists, and primary teachers all agree that there is a strong and intimate link between oral language communication and writing language communication. By the time he starts school, the 5 or 6 year old communicates orally quite adequately, yet he often has great difficulty in linking his oral speech with the written symbols which he is now expected to acquire. There are today some hundred-odd reading methods in use, none of them considered significantly superior to any other; and there are some hundred-odd remedial programs, indicating that no program is as fully successful as hoped for.

Why? Could it be that some of the solutions will have to come through new avenues for learning rather than through yet another method of teaching reading?

This much we already know:

THE SEQUENCE

(1) We know that communication skills develop in sequence:

(a) Man has communicated with fellow man through speech for perhaps half a million years; yet, for barely five thousand years has he used graphic symbols.

(b) The child parallels the experience of the race: he first listens and speaks, and only years later does he read and write.

(c) And once again, this sequence reappears when the 6-year-old begins to read: he first listens while being read to, he then mimics and copies the model, repeats and finally he relates his first set of symbols - oral speech - to his second set of symbols - written speech.

THE GAP

(2) We also know that there exists a large gap, a discrepancy, between the 6-year-old's already developed skill of listening and speaking and his not-yet-developed skill of writing and reading: There is a sharp contrast between the child's meaningful and often rich oral language, and the limited, artificially structured, and often meaningless language of the textbook "readers", whatever they may be,

good or bad. They offer, therefore, little motivation to the child.

The divergent speaker is at a particular disadvantage; he must bridge the gap from his regional dialect or his first native language, via the detour of so-called "standard" English, and continue all the way to the new third set of graphic symbols - reading and writing.

THE MULTISENSORY SKILL

(3) We also know that reading, which is "speech written down", is a multisensory, not a monosensory, skill. It is beginning to be recognized that beginning reading cannot be taught and cannot be learned without constant use of ear and mouth. And when we include writing - as we must - we know that a simultaneous and correlated approach is needed for perfecting a truly multisensory skill involving eyes, ears, mouth, and hands.

THE SIMILARITIES: ORAL LANGUAGE/ BEGINNING READING

(4) We are also beginning to realize that there exist striking similarities in what it takes to master both of these skills, i. e. oral language and beginning reading:

(a) Reading, like oral language, needs extensive, repetitive, outloud practice.

(b) Reading, like oral language, needs extensive, listening practice, and outloud mimicry of spoken models.

(c) Reading, like oral language, must be practiced outloud, and in short bits or frames.

(d) And finally, reading, like oral language, must become "automatic" to fulfill its true function as a means to an end, i. e. as a vehicle of thought communication.

THE CLASSROOM LIMITATIONS

(5) We are also beginning to realize that this common requirement of extensive audio-lingual practice - i. e. of practicing aloud - needs one-at-a-time performance. This conflicts sharply with the limitations of today's classroom in primary education: "In a class of 30, 29 are idle while one is busy," said Al Hayes in New Media For Instruction already years ago. How much opportunity does the young child really have for active oral response in the "inhuman" classroom? One minute a day? Or is it two minutes? Research indicates that teachers, not children, use 75% of the school day for talking. And in addition, in trying to adjust to these outdated classroom limitations, curricular programs have in effect capitulated to them by sacrificing audio-lingual practice techniques. And, thus, the gap between oral and written language widens even further.

THE PAST EXPERIENCE

(6) Yet, we also know that for the past twenty years, a new Education Technology has been able to make significant contributions to reducing classroom limitations on High School and College levels by providing language students with added opportunities for active audio-lingual practice. We therefore began to ask ourselves: Would not young children make similar gains if they were provided with increased opportunities for language participation and practice - oral and graphic - in a systematic way? i. e. Could technology make our "inhuman" classroom conditions just a little bit more human by giving the young child some individual opportunities once again?

THE UNKNOWN

What we did not know until recently was whether what worked with teenagers would also work with the young child, in early childhood and primary. Was it reasonable to assume that the very young child would meet the conditions inherent to programmed technology - self-study, individual participation, sustained attention?

The first clues came to us during our just completed USOE Research Project on Bilingual Readiness in Primary Grades, and these came from the 5 and 6-year-olds themselves.

When we needed to extend a curriculum which had proven highly meaningful and motivating in content (it was based on high quality early childhood literature), but which was limited through scheduling to 15 minutes a day, we designed a system of electronic "satellites" - a term originated by the children - which incorporated tape recorders, headphones, and cartridge tapes with recorded versions of the live-presented bilingual stories, songs and rhythm games, and we made them available to the children as reinforcements in both English and Spanish, whenever they wanted them.

What we observed was that their attention span expanded well beyond age expectations; that they concentrated intensively for extended periods of time; that they thrived on repetition of the programs, and of the language patterns within the program; that they showed a technical readiness often surpassing that of their teachers; and finally, we observed, that these 5 and 6-year-olds started to sing along, respond, answer their literary story friends - on tape - even though, with headphones alone, they lacked the facility to really do this. It was soon obvious to us that the children were ready in every way, to step beyond the experiences of passive auditory listening into active oral interchange and participation - with the tape.

We, therefore, welcomed the opportunity for expanded experimentation which presented itself last Fall when the Virgin Islands' Department of Education wished to include a Pilot Project on Audio-Lingual (Oral) Technology and Beginning Reading in their Language Communication Project.

The children on St. Thomas are dialectically divergent speakers of English; the children on St. Croix are also dialectically divergent speakers, and in addition, well over 50% of all first graders are second language learners, Spanish being their native language. A typical first grade class averages 35-40 children.

THE GOALS

We are attacking the problem of limited opportunity for oral language expression and beginning reading practice through appropriate technology and supportive programming. Any tool, in any work or profession, is only worthwhile if it can help do the job at hand either better, or faster. By providing more one-at-a-time practice, we are increasing the ratio of child participation and are, in effect, giving the child an opportunity for a more human participating relationship within the classroom. In the 18 participating Grade 1 classes, every child is scheduled to get a chance:

(A) to listen and to speak in undisturbed, uninterrupted, and concentrated privacy, for at least ten minutes every day;

(B) to practice all the skills - audio-lingual and visual-manual - basic to correlating oral language and beginning reading practice: to mimic and repeat, to speak and respond; to sense and discover the tie-in between oral language and its written symbols; to practice in a correlated manner, auditory and visual perception and discrimination; to decipher and to read; in short, to experience language in all its forms... every child, individually, for at least 10 minutes every day, and for increasingly longer periods later on.

THE INSTRUMENTATION

We call our technological corner the ALR (Audio-Lingual Reading) Mini-Lab. There are two sections: a teacher's position, and six to ten student positions. The program, which is first presented "live" and then recorded on a tape cassette, passes to the children's positions electronically, via headphones and microphones, i. e. in individual privacy.

Each child sees the teacher and all visual materials presented. Each child hears the teacher (live or taped) and hears also himself, but he does not hear his classmates and

they do not hear him. Thus, all six or eight or ten children participate, speak and read, outloud, at the same time, yet individually, without interfering with each other or waiting for each other.

The children may also be linked to each other for inter-group participation (discussion, choral work, group reading, and so on). There are no controls at the pupils' positions.

A series of buttons at the teacher's station, one for each child, permits instant contact with the children, individually or as a group.

Also from the teacher's position, the teacher can record any child without interfering in his activity, in fact without the child's knowledge.

THE ART OF PROGRAMMING

Now this seems like a lot of new avenues - but are they really solutions? Education Technology is without value unless programmed with content of sufficient significance - to make a difference. Jerome Bruner says: "The art of programming a machine is an extension of the art of teaching." This means that only to the extent that there are good teachers in the classroom will there be good programmed lessons.

An artfully programmed lesson goes well beyond isolated skill items - oral or graphic; it is whole and complete in itself, with sequenced and related parts leading up to the next step. Mere practice of unrelated parts is useless; for effective storage of information, the human brain requires structured order and meaningful connections in order to function effectively later on during retrieval. In reading, just like in oral language, letters, words, sentences must lead up to the ultimate goal of thought communication.

TECHNOLOGY AMPLIFIES MEDIOCRITY

There can be no compromise in this area. Technology amplifies mediocrity. The captured sound, imposed upon a young child, is frought with danger: it pinpoints, it shows up equally the bad and the good. What may pass as a fleeting oral presentation in the classroom simply does not pass - simply is not good enough - when captured and framed electronically.

THE 3 T's: TEACHERS TOOLS TRAINING

Of course, we are aware that Education Technology is just as new to the teachers as it is to the children. Along with the old 3 R's there are now also the new 3 T's: Teachers, Tools and Training. The eighteen teachers in our Pilot Project are simultaneously also learners in an

innovative enterprise. As they attempt to create a lesson script, they learn once again what a lesson really is, they re-evaluate what teaching actually entails, and they gain new insights into how learning really might take place. Only if a teacher goes through the labor pains of creating a programmed lesson - a task quite different from making an overall written lesson plan outline - only then will she make the new opportunities of Education Technology her own.

EFFECTS ON THE TEACHERS

Some of the efforts of our classroom teachers are already paying off. To quote Jerome Bruner again, "A good program has the effect of making one highly conscious of the sequence in which one presents problems, and of the aims of the sequence." Out of this teamwork, there is developing among our teachers an awareness that if new avenues are opening up for learning, then teachers must be also prepared to open up new avenues for teaching.

As Education Technology forces the actual creation of better lessons, these better lessons are brought back by our teachers into the classroom.

EFFECTS ON THE CHILDREN

As for the effects on the children, our observations indicate that the non-verbal child who has remained unresponsive in the conventional classroom, speaks and participates in the privacy of the Lab; that there is increased and total attention and concentration by all the children; and most exciting of all, there is a realistic, de facto, dialogue involvement with a "human" tape and correlated graphic materials. In addition, the child's natural love of repetition and play makes for a self-motivating and self-sustaining avenue of learning. The young child's readiness to walk into the world of fantasy makes possible a new creative, motivating and imaginative form of programming for beginning reading.

"EDUCATION IS HOW KIDS LEARN STUFF"

If the children's apparent concentrated attention, their obvious joy at being able to fully interact, as individuals, not as a mass, is any indication, then there is good reason to expect that "kids <u>will</u> learn stuff."